

COLUMN: Health Care Reform: Letâ€™s Work Together to Make it Better

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By Representative Mike Michaud

When I voted for the Affordable Care Act, I recognized at the time that it wasn't perfect. But I also recognized that just like with other major initiatives in U.S. history, we'd have a chance to amend it and improve it moving forward. That's why I worked to introduce a bipartisan bill on January 12th that would repeal the section that requires more paper work from small businesses. More specifically, this bill would repeal the provision of the new health care law that would require businesses to submit a 1099 form for services or purchases they make over \$600. Passing this bill would be an important step forward.

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That's why I worked to introduce a bipartisan bill on January 12th that would repeal the section that requires more paper work from small businesses. More specifically, this bill would repeal the provision of the new health care law that would require businesses to submit a 1099 form for services or purchases they make over \$600. Passing this bill would be an important step forward.

Unfortunately, a lot of political hay has been made lately of completely repealing the new health care reform law. But it's time that we get past the misleading rhetoric and work together to improve the implementation of the law. Because the reality is, the Affordable Care Act is making a very real, positive difference in the lives of thousands of Mainers.

Because of the new law, Claudette and Richard Therriault from Sabbathus, Maine are now able to access free preventive health care through Medicare, such as cancer screenings and checkups. These are appointments that both Claudette and Richard had been putting off for years because of the out-of-pocket costs. Last year, Richard fell into the Medicare Part D donut hole after only one month and had to pay thousands of dollars out-of-pocket for prescription drugs. Now, because of passage of the Affordable Care Act into law, Claudette and Richard are able to get help paying for their prescription drugs. These important benefits would go away if the new law is repealed.

Tim McGuire from Troy, Maine was able to get health insurance under his father's plan after graduating college and before he was able to access health insurance through his employer. This was made possible because of the dependent coverage provisions included in the Affordable Care Act. This benefit would no longer be available to young adults and their families if the new law is repealed.

Reverend Robert Carlson, President of the Maine Primary Care Association and Penobscot Community Health Care, has been working to expand access to primary care services in Maine with much-needed funding for community health centers, which serve one in seven people in our state — approximately 200,000 Mainers. Community health centers in Maine have already received over \$5 million from the Affordable Care Act, but would see no funding if the new law is repealed.

But the effects of repealing the new health care law are not limited to community health centers or a few specific individuals. Repeal would result in over 3,000 young adults in Maine not being able to get coverage through their parents' health plans. It would bar 252,000 Maine seniors from receiving free preventive Medicare services like annual check-up visits, mammograms and colonoscopies. No help would be available to the thousands of Maine seniors

who fall victim to Medicare's prescription drug donut hole. Small businesses would no longer be eligible for tax credits that help them provide health insurance to their employees. And to make matters worse, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office says that repealing the new law would add \$230 billion to the U.S. national debt over the next 10 years.

I voted against repealing the Affordable Care Act because it would hurt families in Maine and severely set back efforts currently underway to improve our broken health care system. Rather than voting on bills that have no chance of becoming law, it's time to work together to improve the law and make it work better.

Passing a bill like repealing the added paper work burden on small businesses would be a positive step forward. I believe this type of approach represents the beginning of a more pragmatic and bipartisan way forward on health care.

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